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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001038

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/30/2027

TAGS: PGOV PREL TU

SUBJECT: TURKEY: OPPOSITION ELBOWING FOR ELECTION PARTNERS

REF: ANKARA 1035 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner, for Reasons 1.4 (b ,d)

¶1. (C) With early general elections looming, Turkey's opposition parties are scrambling to make hay. All manner of electoral alliances are under discussion. On the nominal center-left, main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) is in a strong position, with others drawn to the flame. Although conventional wisdom is that voters punish the perceived creators of instability, most contacts agree that CHP stands to gain from its contrarian politics of non-constructive opposition. Its core voters also remain firmly committed to this original "party of Ataturk" -- even those who despise Baykal for his autocratic deathgrip on the party will still cast their votes for CHP because it unquestionably opposes the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP).

¶2. (C) Some small parties on both the right and left are reportedly attempting to hitch their wagons to the ideologically-challenged CHP -- traditionally center-left but lately bumping up against the shoulder of right wing nationalists. Democratic Left Party (DSP) leader Zeki Sezer's planned meeting with Baykal will reportedly follow up on discussions between CHP's Onder Sav and DSP's Ahmet Tan; Sezer has promised a decision today. Social Democratic People's Party (SHP)'s sole MP, Ahmet Guryuz Ketenci, downplays reports that they too will join CHP, but acknowledges that they too are working to establish unity on the left. DSP, with no hope of entering parliament on its own, is playing the field: center-right Motherland (Anavatan) MP Edip Safler Gaydali claims DSP has promised support to a True Path Party (DYP)-Anavatan alliance but is waiting to see whether the union materializes. Meanwhile, CHP MP Mesut Deger confirmed press reports that right-populist Genc Parti (Young Party) seeks an alliance with CHP, probably hoping to make the most of their bump from Cem Uzan's status as the only party leader to snub Abdullah Gul in his round of post-nomination courtesy calls.

¶3. (C) In a polarized and highly charged political environment, various segments of the public perceive both CHP and AKP (as well as the military) as the creators of instability, a perception which may lend a boost to the center-right. Although DYP took a hit last Friday when half its MPs bucked party orders and attended the first round, it

has been a rare voice of moderation and remains strong in the rural areas. DYP and Anavatan continue high-level discussions of an electoral alliance, although DYP contacts report AKP is now courting Anavatan in an effort to scuttle the deal. Anavatan has said the party will discuss an alliance at its June 2 convention. At the local level, provincial level Anavatan party officials have told us enthusiasm for this merger is strong. This is the first wave; more will follow.

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